The Danebury Practice

MINOR SURGERY - AFTERCARE AND WOUND CARE GUIDELINES

Thank you for attending The Danebury Practice for your minor surgical procedure.

You have been provided with this aftercare information to help you care for your wound safely and recognise any problems that may require medical advice.

Your clinician may provide you with additional or different instructions depending on the procedure performed, the location of the wound and your individual circumstances. **If you have been given specific instructions by your clinician, these should take priority over this general guidance.**

Immediately after your procedure

Your wound will usually have been covered with a dressing or plaster.

It is normal to experience some:

- Mild soreness or tenderness.
- Minor swelling.
- Bruising.
- A small amount of blood staining on the dressing.
- Tightness around a stitched wound.
- Temporary numbness or altered sensation around the treated area.

If local anaesthetic has been used, the area may remain numb for several hours. Take care not to injure, burn or otherwise damage the area while sensation is reduced.

Caring for your dressing and wound

Unless you have been given different instructions:

- Keep the dressing clean and dry for the first **24–48 hours**.
- Do not unnecessarily touch or manipulate the wound.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before touching the wound or changing a dressing.
- Do not pick at scabs, stitches or the wound.
- If your dressing becomes wet, loose or heavily blood-stained, contact the practice for advice about whether it needs replacing.

NICE recommends appropriate wound dressings following surgery and sterile saline for wound cleansing during the first 48 hours.

After the initial period, your clinician may advise you to gently clean the wound with clean water and follow the specific dressing or ointment instructions provided.

Bathing and showering

Follow the specific instructions given to you regarding when your dressing can be removed.

Unless advised otherwise, avoid soaking the wound during the early healing period.

Once your clinician has advised that the wound can become wet, you may usually shower gently.

- Do not scrub the wound.
- Do not use exfoliating products over the wound.
- Pat the area dry rather than rubbing it.
- Do not soak the wound in a bath or hot tub while it is healing.

NICE advises that patients can generally shower safely 48 hours after surgery, although individual wound-care instructions may differ.

If you have stitches

Your clinician will tell you whether your stitches are:

Dissolvable:
These will gradually disappear and usually do not require removal.

Non-dissolvable:
These will need to be removed at the appropriate time.

Please make sure that you arrange your stitch-removal appointment if this has not already been arranged for you.

The appropriate timing depends on the location and type of procedure. Your clinician will provide you with the specific date or timeframe.

If your procedure did not require stitches

Some minor surgical procedures, including curettage and cautery or some shave procedures, leave a wound that heals naturally.

These wounds can take longer to heal than a stitched wound.

You may notice:

- A scab or crust.
- Mild oozing.
- Redness around the wound.

- Gradual formation of new skin.

Do not pick or remove the scab.

Your clinician will advise you how to dress and care for the wound.

Bleeding

A small amount of blood staining can be normal immediately after minor surgery.

If the wound starts to bleed:

1. Sit down and remain calm.
2. Apply firm, continuous pressure directly over the dressing/wound using clean gauze or a clean cloth.
3. Maintain pressure continuously for **10–15 minutes without repeatedly lifting the dressing to check it**.
4. If necessary, repeat the process.

If bleeding continues despite firm, continuous pressure, contact The Danebury Practice for advice.

If you experience **heavy or uncontrolled bleeding**, seek urgent medical attention. If the bleeding is severe or you feel faint or unwell, call **999**.

Patients taking anticoagulant or antiplatelet medication may be more prone to bleeding. **Do not stop prescribed blood-thinning medication unless specifically instructed to do so by a clinician.**

Pain and discomfort

Some discomfort or tenderness is expected as the local anaesthetic wears off.

If appropriate for you, **paracetamol** can usually be used for pain relief according to the manufacturer's instructions or the advice given by your clinician.

Do not take medication that you have previously been advised to avoid.

If your pain is **increasing rather than gradually improving**, particularly if associated with redness, swelling, warmth or discharge, please contact the practice.

Activity and exercise

Avoid activities that place excessive tension, stretching or pressure on the wound.

For the first few days:

- Avoid strenuous exercise.

- Avoid heavy lifting where this places tension on the wound.
- Avoid activities that repeatedly stretch or rub the treated area.

If your procedure involved stitches, your clinician may recommend avoiding strenuous activity for longer, particularly if the wound is in an area subject to movement or tension.

Your individual instructions will depend on the procedure and location.

Swimming

Avoid swimming until your clinician has advised that the wound has adequately healed.

Do not swim with an open, bleeding, infected or significantly weeping wound.

Bruising and swelling

Mild bruising and swelling can occur following minor surgery and usually settle gradually.

This can be more noticeable when procedures are performed around the eyes or other areas with loose skin.

If swelling becomes increasingly painful, hot, red or rapidly worsens, contact the practice.

What does a healing wound look like?

During normal healing, the wound may initially appear:

- Red or pink.
- Slightly swollen.
- Tender.
- Bruised.
- Crusted or scabbed.

The scar may initially appear red or raised and can gradually become flatter and paler over the following months.

Scarring is an expected consequence of cutting the skin, although the final appearance varies between individuals.

Some patients may develop thicker or more prominent scars. Your clinician will discuss this with you if there are particular factors that may increase your risk.

Looking after your scar

Once the wound has completely healed and there are no open areas, scabs or crusting, your clinician may advise you about scar care.

Protect the healing area from sunlight.

Once appropriate, use a **broad-spectrum SPF 30–50** over exposed healed skin to help reduce the risk of persistent pigmentation and protect the developing scar.

Do not apply scar products, silicone products or massage the area until the wound has fully healed and your clinician has advised that this is appropriate.

Histology results

If tissue or a lesion has been removed and sent for histological examination, the specimen will be examined by a specialist laboratory.

Results may take several weeks.

Your clinician will explain how you will receive your result:

If further assessment or treatment is recommended following the result, we will contact you using the arrangements discussed with you.

Signs of infection

A surgical wound infection can develop after a procedure.

Contact The Danebury Practice if you notice:

- Increasing redness around the wound.
- Increasing warmth.
- Increasing swelling.
- Increasing pain or tenderness.
- Yellow, green or offensive discharge.
- The wound becoming increasingly wet or weepy.
- The wound edges separating.
- Fever or feeling generally unwell.

Infection typically causes symptoms that **worsen rather than gradually improve**. NICE identifies heat, redness, pain and swelling as local features of a surgical wound infection, with fever or other systemic symptoms potentially occurring in more significant infections.

Early assessment is important if infection is suspected.

Wound opening

Occasionally, a wound may partially or completely open following surgery.

This can occur following excessive tension, bleeding or infection.

If your wound appears to be opening:

- Do not attempt to close it yourself.

- Keep the area clean.
- Cover it with an appropriate clean dressing.
- Contact The Danebury Practice for advice.

When should I contact The Danebury Practice?

Please contact us if you have any concerns about your wound, particularly if you develop:

- Increasing pain.
- Increasing redness or warmth.
- Significant or increasing swelling.
- Persistent bleeding.
- Pus or significant discharge.
- Fever or feeling unwell.
- Wound separation.
- Significant skin discolouration.
- Unexpected numbness or loss of function.
- Any other unexpected or worsening symptoms.

If you are unable to contact the practice and require urgent medical advice, contact **NHS 111** or seek an urgent GP assessment.

If you are severely unwell, experiencing uncontrolled bleeding or have another medical emergency, **call 999**.

Important

This information provides general aftercare advice following minor surgery. Your individual aftercare instructions may differ depending on the procedure performed, the site treated and your medical circumstances.

If you are unsure about any aspect of your aftercare, please contact **The Danebury Practice** for advice.

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